

Health psychology and the public health agenda

There is an obvious marriage between the disciplines of health psychology and public health. Yet until recently, there has not been a platform to bring those working in these areas together. The Health Psychology in Public Health Network (HPPHN) aims to do just that.

After meeting in 2013 and seed funding from Hertfordshire County Council, we convened a small group and the development of the network began. Taking leadership of this group we, Jim as Chair and Angel as Chair Elect) now have a clear constitution, remit and committee dedicated in taking the aims of the network forward.

We initially developed this network for the East of England; however, it grew quickly with interest and has become national. The first HPPHN event was held in February 2014, which brought health professionals, policy makers and trainees from both disciplines together to discuss career opportunities and experiences of those who straddle both fields. Professor Paul Bennett, then Chair of the Division of Health Psychology, closed the event with his vision of the HPPHN's impact. We invited attendees to join our network and hosted free CPD events with a focus on health psychology's application to public health, smoking cessation, health behaviour change interventions and managing long-term conditions.

To engage with a wider audience, key members of the HPPHN convened a structured discussion on health psychology's role in public health at the DHP 2014 Annual Conference, and after a series of talks, we asked delegates to make a 'pledge' to merge the two disciplines in their work. In February 2015, we hosted the HPPHN's inaugural Annual General Meeting and together with Professor Mary Barker presented at the Society for Social Medicine's annual conference, September 2015.

The network has increasing support from those within government who can make a real difference to population health, such as Professor Kevin Fenton (Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England), who has acknowledged the impact behavioural sciences can make on the public health agenda.

Want to get involved? Associate membership is free, giving access to HPPHN's social media, a brief newsletter and details of CPD events. In addition, we have produced a series of online resources, including event recordings, presentation slides, interviews and newsletters, that are available through our website (www.hpphn.org.uk), as well as a contact directory for collaboration and networking. Annual membership is £25, subsidised to £10 for students/unwaged. We will host HPPHN's first annual conference and AGM on 11 February 2016 in Hertfordshire, and welcome anyone interested to come along and join us in taking this exiting network forward!

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